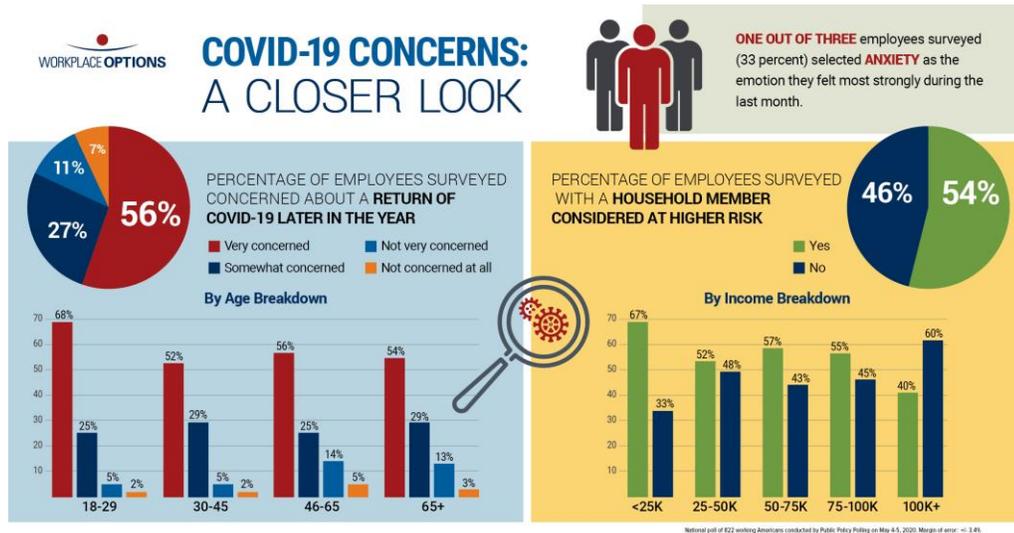


National Poll Finds Employees Concerned Over Return of COVID-19

A national poll, commissioned by Workplace Options, finds that a majority (56 percent) of employees are very concerned about the return of COVID-19 later in the year. Somewhat surprising, the poll found that younger workers, those between the ages of 18 and 29 years old, are more concerned (68 percent very concerned, 25 percent concerned) than other generations, including those age 65 and older (54 percent very concerned, 29 percent concerned). The poll results also revealed significant concerns about job security and widely different impacts on lower- and higher-income respondents.



Ongoing changes and uncertainty a formula for worry and stress

“Employees not just in the U.S. but around the world experienced monumental changes personally and professionally over the last few months against the backdrop of a frightening and largely unknown disease,” says Alan King, President and Chief Operating Officer at Workplace Options.

“And none of us can say with any certainty what will happen next. That’s a formula for worry and stress, both for an organization’s leaders and its workers.”

While the future remains uncertain, King says the principles of human behavior and emotions are unchanged. “Fear and uncertainty often cause people to question what and who can be trusted,” explains King. “Clear and honest communication from employers is critical for building and maintaining trust, which is needed now more than ever as organizations navigate the transitions lying ahead.”

The good news is that 50 percent of the workers polled reported having a high level of trust in their employer’s leadership to ensure workers’ protection from coronavirus, with 34 percent reporting a moderate level of trust. And while 75 percent of the respondents polled said their employer provided useful information during the pandemic, it is concerning that 25 percent said either their employer did not provide information (10 percent) or the information was not useful (15 percent).

Other key findings from the poll include:

Employees’ concerns are related to health risks, job stability, and financial security

- 76 percent of workers reported being very (36 percent) or somewhat (40 percent) concerned about the risk to their health from infection with COVID-19.
- Even more—85 percent—reported being very (51 percent) or somewhat (34 percent) concerned about the risk to the health of other family members. Of those polled, 54 percent reported they had an immediate household member who was considered “high risk” for COVID-19.
- One out of three workers polled (33 percent) selected “anxiety” as the emotion they felt most strongly during the last month. The remainder of responses were evenly distributed among “disappointment” (11 percent), “sadness” (8 percent), “mistrust” (9 percent), “loneliness” (6 percent), and “anger” (6 percent). Twelve percent selected “something else” and 11 percent identified “contentment” as the emotion felt most strongly.

- 48 percent of workers reported being very (16 percent) or somewhat (32 percent) concerned about their job security.
- 51 percent of workers are concerned about job security of a household member (29 percent somewhat concerned, 22 percent very concerned)

The shift to remote work has affected employees differently, and those differences vary by gender and income

Among the respondents who reported a shift to doing more or all of their work from home:

- 29 percent said their quality of life was worse with the change and 28 percent said their quality of life was better. (42 percent reported no change in their quality of life.)
- 36 percent of women reported having a better quality of life working at home, compared to 22 percent of men.
- The difference was even more pronounced among lower- and higher-earning workers. Only 5 percent of workers earning less than \$25,000 reported that their quality of life had improved with a change to working from home, compared to 36 percent among those earning \$25,000 to \$50,000.

The responses of lower-earning workers shine a light on how the pandemic has disproportionately affected workers earning less than \$25,000 a year

- 40 percent report having their income reduced (compared with 20 percent among workers making \$50,000 or more).
- 67 percent report having a household member at higher risk from COVID-19 (compared with 40 percent for those making \$100,000 or more).
- 19 percent report being very concerned about having adequate food for their household (compared with 1 to 8 percent for higher income groups).

“The poll responses point to some of the key challenges employers are facing,” says King. “While many leaders are understandably focused on financial or operational concerns, those pale in comparison to the wave of workforce issues they are facing. It is imperative that organizations communicate sensitivity towards the needs of their workers and provide support whenever and however possible.”

The national poll was conducted by Public Policy Polling on May 4–5, 2020 and is based on responses from 822 working Americans. The margin of error is +/- 3.4 percent. Full results are available [here](#).

Article also available online [here](#).

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About Workplace Options

Workplace Options helps employees balance their work, family and personal needs to become healthier, happier, and more productive, both personally and professionally. The company’s world-class employee support, effectiveness, and wellbeing services provide information, resources, referrals, and consultation on a variety of issues ranging from dependent care and stress management to clinical services and wellness programs.

Drawing from an international network of credentialed providers and professionals, Workplace Options is the world’s largest integrated employee support and work-life services provider. Service centers in the U.S., Canada, UK, Ireland, Portugal, France, Belgium, UAE, Singapore, Japan, China, India, and Indonesia support more than 58 million employees across 90,000 organizations and more than 200 countries and territories. To learn more, visit www.workplaceoptions.com.